

PUPPY LOVE, THEN PRIDE AND GROOM

DOGS JUST LOVE A MAKEOVER

Sarah Sharples

DOGS were considered dirty during Jenny Kent's childhood and growing up she never had one as a pet.

When her own children had left home, she was looking for a hobby to do with her husband, so they got a doberman puppy and fell in love with showing it in dog competitions.

Then, when she saw an apricot poodle at one of the shows, she had to have one, but needed to learn how to groom it.

"The poodle started the journey into a new career for the former school teacher.

"I met a couple who showed me how to groom and then I met John Edwards, who has been a poodle breeder for 40 years ... He also taught me grooming for eight months and I didn't want to go back to teaching, so John said 'Go

PET CARE INDUSTRY

- There were around 38 million pets in Australia in 2006, and 3.75 million of those were dogs.
- The pet care industry contributes around \$4.74 billion to the economy annually and employs over 44,700 people.
- The job can involve washing, brushing, combing knots out, clipping nails and fur, cleaning ears, putting on flea or oil treatments, blow drying and general maintenance of a dog.

and buy a salon',” Mrs Kent said. “No one else was going to take me on because I was 43, I was too old and didn't know much, so I bought Marcia's North Shore Grooming in Lane Cove.”

For the now 57-year-old, the career change has been a success, as her grooming business Pet Design, has expanded to salons in

Manly and Epping, particularly so she could pay better wages to retain staff and introduce training for junior groomers.

Mrs Kent now has 13 dogs of her own, including three rescue dogs, and spends her days covered in fur with a pair of scissors or clippers in her hand.

“It's most rewarding when you have the dogs come in with matted fur and you take it off nicely and they lick you and tell you thank you by looking in your eyes. People who work with dogs are lovely too,” she said.

“It calms a lot of people down this job. Some jobs you can get uptight and angry, but when you're put with dogs and you cuddle them and they respond and just love you, it's lovely.”

Challenges of the job are burnout, Mrs Kent said, as she has unofficially heard figures that groomers only last between two and five years.



Jenny Kent in one of three Pet Design grooming salons.

Picture: BRADEN FASTIER